

## **PUPPIES: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW OWNERS**

We would like to congratulate you on the acquisition of your new puppy. Owning a dog can be an extremely rewarding experience, but it is also a large responsibility. We hope this handout will give you the information needed to make some good decisions regarding your puppy.

First, let us say that we are grateful that you have chosen us to help you with your puppy's health care. If you have questions concerning any subject related to your puppy's health, please feel free to call our hospital. Our entire professional staff is willing and happy to help you.

### ***What type of playing should I expect from a puppy?***

Stimulating play is important during the first week. Stalking and pouncing are important play behaviors in puppies and are necessary for proper muscular development. Your puppy will be less likely to use family members for these activities if you provide adequate puppy-safe toys. The best toys are lightweight and movable. These include wads of paper and rubber balls. Any toy that is small enough to be swallowed should be avoided. We can help you choose the safest toys for your pet loved one.

### ***Can I discipline a puppy?***

Disciplining a young puppy may be necessary if its behavior threatens people or property, but harsh punishment should be avoided. Hand clapping and using shaker cans or horns can be intimidating enough to inhibit undesirable behavior. However, remote punishment is preferred. Remote punishment consists of using something that appears unconnected to the punisher to stop the problem behavior. Examples include using spray bottles, throwing objects in the direction of the puppy to startle (but not hit) it, and making loud noises. Remote punishment is preferred because the puppy associates punishment with the undesirable act and not with you.

### ***When should my puppy be vaccinated?***

There are many fatal diseases of dogs. Fortunately, we have the ability to prevent several of these by vaccinating your pet. In order to be effective, these vaccines must be given as a series of injections. Ideally, they are given at about 6-8, 12, and 16 weeks of age, but this schedule may vary depending on several factors.

### ***Why does my puppy need more than one vaccination?***

When the puppy nurses its mother, it receives a temporary form of immunity through its mother's milk. This immunity is in the form of proteins called maternal antibodies. For about 24-48 hours after birth, the puppy's intestine allows absorption of these antibodies directly into the blood stream. This immunity is of benefit during the first few weeks of the puppy's life, but at some point, this immunity fails and the puppy must be able to make its own long-lasting immunity. Vaccinations are used for this purpose. As long as

the mother's antibodies are present, vaccinations do not have a chance to stimulate the puppy's immune system. The mother's antibodies interfere by neutralizing the vaccine.

Many factors determine when the puppy will be able to respond to the vaccinations. These include the level of immunity in the mother dog, how much antibody has been absorbed, and the number of vaccines given to the puppy. Since we do not know when an individual puppy will lose the short-term immunity, we give a series of vaccinations. We hope that at least two of these will fall in the window of time when the puppy has lost immunity from its mother but has not yet been exposed to disease. A single vaccination, even if effective, is not likely to stimulate the long-term immunity, which is so important.

### ***Do all puppies have worms?***

Intestinal parasites are common in puppies. Puppies can become infected with parasites before they are born or later through their mother's milk. Puppies should be wormed every 2 weeks starting at 2 weeks of age until they are 12 weeks old and then monthly until they are 6 months old and then every 3 months for the rest of their life. The dose of worming medication depends on their body weight, hence as the puppy grows the dosage will need to be increased.

### ***How important are heartworms?***

Heartworms are important parasites. They live in your bloodstream and cause major damage to the heart and lungs. Heartworms are transmitted by mosquitoes. Fortunately, we have drugs that will protect your dog from heartworms. These drugs are very safe and effective if given regularly. We can help you choose the best product for your pet's needs and lifestyle.

Heartworm preventatives are dosed according to your dog's weight. As the weight increases, the dosage should also increase. Please note the dosing instructions on the package.

### ***There are lots of choices of dog foods. What should I feed my puppy?***

Diet is extremely important during the growing months of a dog's life. We recommend a premium NAME-BRAND FOOD made by a national dog food company (not a generic or local brand) and diet MADE FOR PUPPIES. This should be fed until your puppy is about 12-18 months of age, depending on its breed and size.

Feeding a dry, canned, or semi-moist form of dog food is acceptable. Each has advantages and disadvantages. Dry food is definitely the most inexpensive. It can be left in the dog's bowl without drying. The good brands of dry food are just as nutritious as the other forms. As a rule, most veterinarians will recommend dry food for your puppy.

Semi-moist and canned foods are also acceptable. However, both are considerably more expensive than dry food. They often are more appealing to the dog's taste; however, they are not more nutritious. If you feed a very tasty food, you are running the risk of creating a dog with a finicky appetite. In addition, the semi-moist foods are high in sugar.

Table foods are not recommended. Because they are generally very tasty, dogs will often begin to hold out for these and not eat their well-balanced dog food. If you choose to give your puppy table food, be sure that at least 90% of its diet is good quality commercial puppy food.

We enjoy a variety of things to eat in our diet. However, most dogs actually prefer not to change from one food to another unless they are trained to do so by the way you feed them. Do not feel guilty if your dog is happy eating the same food day after day, week after week.

Commercials for dog food can be very misleading. If you watch carefully you will notice that commercials often promote dog food on the basis of TASTE. Nutrition is rarely mentioned. Most of the "gourmet" foods are marketed to appeal to owners who want the best for their dogs; however, they do not offer the dog any nutritional advantage over a good quality dry food, and they are far more expensive. If your dog eats a gourmet food very long, it will probably not be happy with other foods. If it needs a special diet due to a health problem later in life, it is very unlikely to accept it. Therefore, we do not encourage feeding gourmet dog foods.

### ***How often should I feed my puppy?***

There are several "right" ways to feed puppies. The most popular method is commonly called "meal feeding." This means that the puppy is fed at specific times of the day. A measured amount of food should be offered four times per day for 5-12 week old puppies. What is not eaten within 30 minutes is taken up. If the food is eaten within 3-4 minutes, the quantity is probably not sufficient. Puppies fed in this manner generally begin to cut themselves out of one of those meals by 3-4 months of age and perhaps another one later. If a meal is ignored for several days, it should be discontinued.

"Free choice feeding," means that food is available at all times. This works well with dry foods and for some dogs. However, other dogs tend to overeat and become obese. If there is weight gain after the optimal size is reached, this method of feeding should be discontinued.

### ***How do I housebreak my new puppy?***

Housebreaking should begin as soon as your puppy enters his new home. How long the training must continue depends on both the puppy and you. Some pups learn sooner than others. Your dog wants to please you. But a puppy's memory is short, so your patience is important. A home with a poorly trained puppy is not a happy home for you or the puppy.

- a) The puppy's bed may be a box, open at one end and slightly larger than the puppy. If the bed is too large, the puppy may defecate or urinate in a corner rather than go outside. If the bed is smaller, the puppy will do its "business" outside rather than soil its bed.
- b) Enclose the bed in a small area, such as a laundry room. Cover this area with newspapers to be used at night, or when your pup is left unsupervised.
- c) A common housebreaking technique is creating a "scent post". A scent post is created when your puppy has an "accident." The problem becomes one of locating the scent post in the place you want it.
- d) To create a scent post, leave a stool from the last "accident" or wet paper on the clean paper in the place you want it, and coax or scoot the puppy to that area. The same is true of an outside scent post, but without the paper, in an out-of-the-way place in the yard. This will solve the "mine-field" problem.
- e) The first thing in the morning, the puppy should be scooted to the scent post. This is so he can learn his way to the door and the scent post. Let him sniff about. The moment he has relieved himself, pat him on the head and immediately bring him into the house. Do not let him play about. The toilet period and play period should be definitely separate in the puppy's routine.

- f) The puppy should then be fed. In a short while the puppy will become uneasy and walk in circles sniffing at the floor. The puppy should then be scooted and coaxed to the scent post as quickly as possible.
- g) This routine should be repeated every hour or two throughout the day, especially after meals and naps.
- h) When the puppy is taken out to play, it is wise to leave the house by another door and avoid taking him near his scent post. Never play with your pup until after he has been taken out and has eliminated.
- i) There will of course be some "accidents" in the house. If you catch the puppy eliminating in front of you say a sharp "No!" and rush him to the scent post. Punishment 5 minutes after the offense is too late – if you find a mishap just clean up the area. When cleaning ideally use an odor neutralizer (e.g. ban-odor or nil –odor) rather than a detergent as the scent can attract the puppy back to the area again).
- j) Positive reinforcement of proper urine and bowel habits is just as important as properly applied discipline. When your puppy urinates or defecates in the correct place, spend several minutes stroking and praising him.

***How do I insure that my puppy is well socialized?***

The **socialization period** for dogs is between 4 and 12 weeks of age. During that time, the puppy is very impressionable to social influences. If it has good experiences with men, women, children, cats, other dogs, etc., it is likely to accept them throughout life. If the experiences are absent or unpleasant, it may become apprehensive or adverse to any of them. Therefore, during the period of socialization, we encourage you to expose your dog to as many types of social events and influences as possible and puppy preschool is an excellent method to safely do this.

***What can be done about fleas on my puppy?***

Fleas do not stay on your puppy all of their time; occasionally, they jump off and seek another host. Therefore, it is important to kill fleas on your new puppy before they can become established in your house. Many of the flea control products that are safe on adult dogs are not safe for puppies less than four months of age. Be sure that any flea product you use is labeled safe for puppies.

We will provide you with age and weight-specific flea control products that are safe for your pet.

***My puppy seems to be constantly chewing. Why does this occur?***

Chewing is a normal puppy characteristic. The puppy's baby teeth are present by about four weeks of age. They begin to fall out at four months of age and are replaced by the adult (permanent) teeth by about six months of age. Therefore, chewing is a puppy characteristic that you can expect until about 6-7 months of age. It is important that you do what you can to direct your puppy's chewing toward acceptable objects. You should provide puppy-safe items chew toys so other objects are spared – don't give them an old pair of shoes as they don't know the difference between these and your best pair!

***My puppy has episodes of hiccuping and a strange odor to its breath. Are these normal?***

Yes. Many puppies experience episodes of hiccuping that may last several minutes. This is normal and will not last but a few weeks or months. All puppies have a characteristic odor to their breath that is commonly called “puppy breath.” It is also normal and will last only until the puppy matures.

### ***Can I trim my puppy's sharp toe nails?***

Puppies have very sharp toe nails. They can be trimmed with your regular finger nail clippers or with nail trimmers made for dogs and cats. If you take too much off the nail, you will cut into the “quick” and bleeding and pain will occur. If this happens, neither you nor your dog will want to do this again. Therefore, a few points are helpful:

1. If your dog has clear or white nails, you can see the pink of the quick through the nail. Avoid the pink area, and you should be out of the quick.
2. If your dog has black nails, you will not be able to see the quick so only cut 1/32" (1 mm) of the nail at a time until the dog begins to get sensitive. The sensitivity will usually occur before you are into the blood vessel. With black nails, it is likely that you will get too close on at least one nail.
3. If your dog has some clear and some black nails, use the average clear nail as a guide for cutting the black ones.
4. When cutting nails, use sharp trimmers. Dull trimmers tend to crush the nail and cause pain even if you are not in the quick.
5. You should always have styptic powder available. This is sold in pet stores under several trade names, but it will be labeled for use in trimming nails.

### ***What are ear mites?***

Ear mites are tiny parasites that live in the ear canal of dogs (and cats). The most common sign of ear mite infection is scratching of the ears. Sometimes the ears will appear dirty because of a black material in the ear canal; this material is sometimes shaken out. The instrument we use for examining the ear canals, an otoscope, has the necessary magnification to allow us to see the mites. Sometimes, we can find the mites by taking a small amount of the black material from the ear canal and examining it with a microscope. Although they may leave the ear canals for short periods of time, they spend the vast majority of their lives within the protection of the ear canal. Transmission generally requires direct ear-to-ear contact. Ear mites are common in litters of puppies if their mother has ear mites.

Ear infections may also cause the production of a dark discharge in the ear canals. It is important that we examine your puppy to be sure the black material is due to ear mites and not infection. Please do not ask us to just dispense medication without having the opportunity to make an accurate diagnosis.

### ***Why should I have my female dog spayed?***

Spaying offers several advantages. The female's heat periods result in about 2-3 weeks of vaginal bleeding. This can be quite annoying if your dog is kept indoors. Male dogs are attracted from blocks away and, in fact, seem to come out of the woodwork. They seem to go over, around, and through many doors or fences. Your dog will have a heat period about every six months.

Spaying is the removal of the uterus and the ovaries. Therefore, heat periods no longer occur. In many cases, despite your best efforts, the female will become pregnant; spaying prevents unplanned litters of puppies.

It has been proven that as the female dog gets older, there is a significant incidence of breast cancer and uterine infections if she has not been spayed. Spaying before she has any heat periods will virtually eliminate the chance of either. If you do not plan to breed your dog, we strongly recommend that she be spayed before her first heat period. This can be done anytime between five and six months of age.

***Why should I have my male dog neutered?***

Neutering offers several advantages. Male dogs are attracted to a female dog in heat and will climb over or go through fences to find her. Male dogs are more aggressive and more likely to fight, especially with other male dogs. As dogs age, the prostate gland frequently enlarges and causes difficulty urinating and defecating. Neutering will solve, or greatly help, all of these problems that come with owning a male dog. The surgery is usually performed between five and six months of age.

***If I choose to breed my female dog, how old should she be?***

If you plan to breed your dog, she should have at least one or two heat periods first. She will then be more physically mature allowing her to be a better mother. We do not recommend breeding after five years of age unless she has been bred prior to that. Having her first litter after five years of age increases the risk of complications during the pregnancy and/or delivery. Once your dog has had her last litter, she should be spayed to prevent the reproductive problems older dogs have.

***Can you recommend something for pet identification?***

The latest in pet identification is microchipping. This tiny device is implanted with a needle much like administering an injection. A special scanner can detect these chips; veterinary hospitals, humane societies, and animal shelters across the country have these scanners. A national registry permits the return of microchipped pets throughout Australia. We strongly recommend microchipping all pets.